



Public Education and Government Television Channel Task Force

Meeting Summary

December 6, 2007

Date of Meeting: December 6, 2007

The Public Education and Government Television Channel Task Force met in the Information Technology Building at 481 West Paseo Redondo, Tucson, AZ 85701.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ryan Bruce, Task Force Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Ryan Bruce, Lisa Contreras, John Hall, Neil Markowitz (by phone), Matthew Muehlebach, and Augustine Romero.

Absent: No members absent.

Staff Members Present: Julie Stevens and Ann Strine

3. REVIEW OF 11.08.2007 and 11.15.2007 MINUTES

Matt Muehlebach made a motion to approve both the 11.08.2007 and 11.15.2007 meeting minutes, seconded by Augustine Romero, and then carried unanimously on a voice vote of 6 to 0.

4. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

No discussion.

5. ESTABLISH OUTLINE FOR COX COMMUNICATIONS SETTLEMENT DISCUSSION/ DECISION

Ryan Bruce opened by asking members for suggestions on how to proceed in framing how the allocation decision will be made for the \$200,000 Cox Communications settlement. Lisa Contreras began by thanking each of the PEG stations (TUSD-TV, AccessTucson, and Tucson Channel 12) for the tours, information packets, and the recent one-page "Funding Requests" as these proved especially useful to her. Lisa then shared that she watched the Mayor and Council proceedings where the settlement was discussed and that the Mayor and Council's original intent was to allocate the dollars equally between AccessTucson and Tucson Channel 12. An amendment was offered to that motion, which passed, to seek a recommendation from the newly formed PEG Task Force on the distribution of the settlement. It is because of this and her review of the information received to date that she feels compelled to include the one-time funding request from TUSD-TV in the deliberations for this one-time allocation. However, she wanted to confirm with Ann Strine to what extent the city has funded TUSD TV in the past as she has concerns with whether the Task Force's recommendation for this allocation could or should be considered as precedence for future funding decisions. The City of Tucson made a one-time contribution of \$50,000 to TUSD-TV, but there is no ongoing financial support. AccessTucson regularly submits requests for funding to the City of Tucson for consideration. Ryan Bruce then recommended that the group consider defining time limits for the progression of the discussion to ensure they address all agenda items and conclude the meeting as scheduled. Lisa suggested, and the group agreed, to 15 minutes for "criteria", 30 minutes to review the funding requests, and 45 minutes to come to a decision on the final allocation.



Public Education and Government Television Channel Task Force

Meeting Summary
December 6, 2007

With that, John Hall offered conditions for the group to start with: 1) No staff adds, 2) Consider which funding request would benefit the most people (although difficult because the criteria would be different for each organization). Augustine believed that the recommendation should be much looser and not place any restrictions on what monies could or could not be used for. The group then agreed that although it could make a recommendation that any amounts awarded be used toward a certain purpose, it would have no authority to enforce. There was then dialogue on how to gauge 'reach' and that only Channel 12 and AccessTucson would benefit from this criterion, whereas an injection of capital into TUSD-TV might help to bolster its ability to branch out, thus reach more people. It was decided that a review of each Funding Request and examining line items might help in shaping 'conditions' and contemplating benefits generated.

Representatives from each of the PEG organizations were present and asked if they would like to elaborate on their funding requests and take member questions. Mary Canty, who spoke on behalf of TUSD-TV, explained that their request was submitted for two levels of support and fielded questions. The first-level request for \$66,500 would be used for equipment, including a "studio in a box" (\$35,000), that would allow them to tape School Board meetings, sporting events, and could be used in place of their older studio equipment in many cases. The equipment could be staffed with existing personnel and they have the necessary cameras/hardware. An added benefit in funding this effort would lie in making the equipment/functionality available to other districts—for a price. The added dollars and collaboration among numerous districts would help to build a true "education" channel. Other initiatives in this phase would include launching pilot programs (multi-language reading series, performing arts, and varsity sports programs) and marketing expenditures. The second tier request would be used for additional pilots and allow for the move toward video-streaming capability, which is used in distance learning programs. The district has a detailed plan to enable the immediate implementation of purchases/programs after rigorous studies of other successful PEG stations.

Sam Behrend, of AccessTucson, stated that each of the organizations before them today is deserving of funding, contribute greatly to the City of Tucson, and should be supported. Mr. Behrend stated that AccessTucson has a well-documented need for equipment replacement as well as building infrastructure deficiencies. With very fluid levels of financial support, equipment needs have been ceded to staffing in budgeting priorities. They would use this one-time contribution to "get back on track". There was a discussion regarding the sale or donation of used equipment—as well as sharing of equipment—amongst the PEG organizations, some of which has taken place in the past, and how this might be considered in the Task Forces funding recommendations. It was clarified that requests for "High Definition" equipment are no longer deemed as a luxury expenses in this day and age; rather, all stations need to gear-up for the eventual move to HD and the difference in price is now nominal.

Tucson 12's Jennifer McKinney stated their request is primarily to cover an audience research survey and their HD conversion plan (equipment and server storage space). John Hall asked for clarification on program content: is it driven by Mayor and Council or by surveys? Jennifer explained that although programming is designed to deliver the city's message and is aligned with the vision as developed by its elected officials, it is through the survey that it can be determined if indeed this has translated into promoting Tucson and increasing the percentage of citizens who are more likely, for instance, to vote, participate in a community event, or visit downtown venues among other considerations.

Upon the conclusion of the presentations/exchanges, members went back to determining how their decision might be structured. Lisa Contreras said there could be arguments made for any combination of funding percentages. There was overall consensus on this and speculation that their decision would likely be examined in the future, thus consideration should be given to this. Matt Muehlebach read the charge of the Task Force, as written by Mayor and Council, and Ann Strine stated that she felt the underlying question the Task Force is being asked was what is the appropriate use of city dollars—not who or what is deserving.



Public Education and Government Television Channel Task Force

Meeting Summary
December 6, 2007

6. COX COMMUNICATIONS SETTLEMENT DISCUSSION/ DECISION

Matt reminded the group that they have only seen a “snapshot” of each PEG organization and additional information/perspective would be gleaned as they moved forward. Any decisions made today would not necessarily be indicative of future assessments. Lisa asked whether a starting point would be to determine whether the allocation should include TUSD-TV; Augustine Romero made a motion that TUSD-TV be considered for this and future funding recommendations the Task Force makes. Discussion continued, but did not yield a second to this particular motion. Matt would like to know if there is a reason TUSD is not funded by the city—is it because the city is not a proper funding source? Mary Canty was permitted to share statistics from other major cities (Phoenix, Sacramento, Tampa) with successful education channels—all of which receive a form of PEG dollars. Each community/cable contract disburses these dollars differently. Education station structures differ as well: some support K – 12 and others incorporate state and private universities. John Hall stated that he struggles with the lack of performance history to review from TUSD, yet recognizes they cannot establish this history unless afforded the opportunity. His personal bottom line is that AccessTucson should be allocated a portion of the settlement due to the importance of community access.

Discussion and questions ensued as to whether either AccessTucson or Channel 12 had incorporated any of the original \$100K into their upcoming operating budgets. AccessTucson had informal assurances about the allotment and did incorporate the amount into their FY08 budget; Channel 12 did not. Lisa Contreras stated that budgets in all organizations are fluid and continually require adjustments due to changing factors. Any assumptions by AccessTucson should not necessarily be at the expense of TUSD-TV or Channel 12. Neil reiterated what all had stated regarding how valuable each organization is, but perhaps a “lens of perspective” would be useful: Arizona currently ranks near the bottom on education in the nation and this might be an opportunity to make a statement that there should be a larger commitment to educational efforts. Augustine felt that members should look at the “financial and structural health” of the three organizations, stating that TUSD-TV is “limping” while AccessTucson and Channel 12 are well funded. Further, it would not be appropriate to allocate second-hand equipment to the TUSD-TV. While he applauds, for instance, Channel 12’s efforts, he feels their funding request does not represent a priority. John Hall wondered what value TUSD-TV’s multi-language reading series and sports broadcasts would offer? Neil expressed how important it should be to send a message that educational endeavors should be considered going forward. Matt reiterated the need to continue to gather information and be cautious about not going too far with regard to ‘sending a message’; i.e. there is just not enough information right now. Lisa stated that an equal split across the board could be viewed as a message in and of itself, and to leave out the city’s Channel 12 would be in contradiction of Mayor and Council’s past actions. John Hall asked what drove Channel 12’s funding request, to which Jennifer explained that the equipment purchase was based on a 10-year replacement plan and emphasized how everyone will need to move to HD. Concerns were voiced whether the TUSD-TV infrastructure would be ready to handle a large infusion of capital and the contention arose again that how can this be determined without taking the chance on the investment. Mary Canty’s strong capability to lead the station was noted. Ryan Bruce continues to struggle with what he views as the duplication of resources across the board. The consensus as the discourse drew to a close was that equity was important to all for both this decision, and those the group will make going forward. With that, a number of motions were made for the distribution of the \$200,000 Cox Settlement:

- Matt: \$80K (AccessTucson) / \$80K (Channel 12) / \$40K (TUSD-TV); did not receive a second.
- John: \$100K (AccessTucson) / \$50K (TUSD-TV) / \$50K (Channel 12); motion failed for lack of a second.
- Augustine: \$65K (TUSD-TV) / \$100K (AccessTucson) / \$35K (Channel 12); received a sufficient second, but failed to pass due to a tie voice vote of 3 – 3.



Public Education and Government Television Channel Task Force

Meeting Summary

December 6, 2007

- Neil: \$66K (TUSD-TV) / \$66K (AccessTucson) / \$66K (Channel 12); no second.
- Lisa: \$50K (TUSD-TV) / \$75K (AccessTucson) / \$75K (Channel 12); no second.
- Ryan: \$50K (TUSD-TV) / \$100K (AccessTucson) / \$50K (Channel 12); received a second from John Hall, but failed on a voice vote of 2 – 4.
- Lisa: \$50K (TUSD-TV) / \$75K (AccessTucson) / \$75K (Channel 12); Neil seconded the motion, which failed to pass on a tie vote of 3 – 3.

Discussion here regarding the strong sentiment to contribute \$100,000 to AccessTucson: the infrastructure need was noted as the rationale. Contentions made that \$75,000 would go a long way toward the needed building repairs as would \$40,000 on TUSD-TV's first tier request for equipment. A reminder of Mayor and Council's past precedence was placed for consideration by Matt; however, Neil noted there were two new members just seated on the Council.

- Lisa: \$80K (AccessTucson) / \$80K (Channel 12) / \$40K (TUSD-TV); seconded by Matt. Failed on a tie vote of 3 – 3.
- Augustine: \$85K (AccessTucson) / \$65K (Channel 12) / \$50K (TUSD-TV).

Discussion on the motion included suggestions of exploring creative use of new equipment purchases, as well as the disposal of older equipment. Also, how the development of a community media center would go far in addressing many needs. The motion was amended as follows by John Hall:

- \$90K (AccessTucson) / \$80K (Channel 12) / \$30K (TUSD-TV); seconded by Ryan Bruce.

Additional discussion regarding how these allocations address significant portions of each funding request; however, the motion failed on a voice vote of 2 – 4.

- Lisa: \$80K (AccessTucson) / \$80K (Channel 12) / \$40K (TUSD-TV); seconded by Matt and passed on a voice vote of 4 – 2.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- A) Review of Next Meeting. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 10, 2008 at 11:30 a.m. in the Large Conference Room of the IT building.

8. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.

No discussion.

8. CALL TO THE AUDIENCE

Lisa Jones expressed appreciation for the quality of the Task Force's deliberations and believes it is important for the Mayor and Council to be made aware of this. Chyrl Lander and Mary Canty shared their personal appreciation as well as that of TUSD's Superintendent; Sam Behrend echoed all of the sentiments.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 p.m.